

INCIPIT LEGENDA DIDONIS MARTIRIS, CARTHAGINIS
REGINE



AND HONOUR, VIRGIL MANTUAN,
Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,
follow thy lantern, as thou gost biforn,
How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.
In thyn Eneid and Naso wol I take
The tenour, and the grete effectes make.

WHAN Troye broght was to de-
struccioun
By Grekes sleighte, and namely
by Sinoun,
feyning the hors yoffred to Minerve,
Through which that many a Troyan mooste
sterve;
And Ector had, after his deeth, appered,
And fyr so wood, it mighte nat be stered,
In al the noble tour of Ilioun,
That of the citee was the cheef dungoun;
And al the contree was so lowe ybrought,
And Priamus the king fordoon and noght;
And Eneas was charged by Venus
To flee away, he took Ascanius,
That was his sone, in his right hand, and
fledde;
And on his bakke he bar and with him ledde
his olde fader, cleped Anchises,
And by the weye his wyf Creusa he lees.
And mochel sorwe hadde he in his minde
Er that he coude his felawshippe finde.
But, at the laste, whan he had hem founde,
He made him redy in a certein stounde,
And to the see ful faste he gan him hye,

And sailleth forth with al his companye
Toward Itaille, as wolde destinee.
But of his aventures in the see
Nis nat to purpos for to speke of here,
for hit acordeth nat to my matere.
But, as I seide, of him and of Dido
Shal be my tale, til that I have do.
So longe he sailed in the salte see
Til in Libye unnethe aryved he,
With shippes seven and with no more navye;
And glad was he to londe for to hye,
So was he with the tempest al toshake.
And whan that he the haven had ytake,
He had a knight, was called Achates;
And him of al his felawshippe he chees
To goon with him, the contree for tespye;
He took with him no more companye.
But forth they goon, and lafte his shippes ryde,
his fere and he, withouten any gyde.
So longe he walketh in this wildernesse
Til, at the laste, he mette an hunteresse.
A howe in honde and arwes hadde she,
Her clothes cutted were unto the knee;
But she was yit the fairest creature
That ever was yformed by nature;
And Eneas and Achates she grette,
And thus she to hem spak, whan she hem mette.
Sawe ye, quod she, as ye han walked wyde,
Any of my sustren walke yow besyde,
With any wilde boor or other beste
That they han hunted to, in this foreste,
Yulked up, with arwes in her cas?
Nay, soothly, lady, quod this Eneas;
But, by thy beaute, as hit thinketh me,
Thou mightest never erthely womman be,
But Dhebus suster artow, as I gesse.
And, if so be that thou be a goddesse,
Have mercy on our labour and our wo.
NAM no goddes, soothly, quod she tho;
for maidens walken in this contree here,
With arwes and with bowe, in this manere.
This is the regne of Libie, ther ye been,
Of which that Dido lady is and queen.
And shortly tolde him al the occasioun
Why Dido com into that regioun,
Of which as now me lusteth nat to ryme;
Hit nedeth nat; hit nere but los of tyme.
for this is al and som, it was Venus,
his owne moder, that spak with him thus;
And to Cartage she bad he sholde him dighte,
And vanished anon out of his sighte.
I coude folwe, word for word, Virgyle,
But it wolde lasten al to longe a whyle.
HIS noble queen, that cleped was Dido,
That whylom was the wyf of Sitho,
That fairer was then is the brighte sonne,
This noble toun of Cartage hath begonne;
In which she regneth in so greet honour,
That she was holde of alle quenes flour,
Of gentilnesse, of freedom, of beautee;
That wel was him that mighte her ones see;
Of kinges and of lordes so desyred,
That al the world her beaute hadde yfyred;

She stood so wel in every wightes grace.
WHAN Eneas was come unto that place,
Unto the maister temple of al the toun
Ther Dido was in her devocioun,
ful prively his wey than hath he nome.
Whan he was in the large temple come,
I can nat seyn if that hit be possible,
But Venus hadde him maked invisible;
Thus seith the book, withouten any lees.
And whan this Eneas and Achates
hadden in this temple been overal,
Than founde they, depeynted on a wal,
How Troye and al the lond destroyed was.
Alas! that I was born, quod Eneas,
Throughout the world our shame is kid so wyde,
Now it is peynted upon every syde!
We, that weren in prosperitee,
Be now dissaundred, and in swich degre,
No lenger for to liven I ne kepe!
And, with that worde, he brast out for to wepe
So tendrely, that routhe hit was to sene.
This freshe lady, of the citee quene,
Stood in the temple, in her estat royal,
So richely, and eek so fair withal,
So yong, so lusty, with her eyen glade,
That, if that God, that heaven and erthe made,
Wolde han a love, for beaute and goodnesse,
And womanhod, and trouthe, and seemlinessse,
Whom sholde he loven but this lady swete?
There nis no womman to him half so mete.
FORTUNE, that hath the world in govern-
aunce,
Hath sodainly broght in so newe a chaunce,
That never was ther yit so fremd a cas.
for al the companye of Eneas,
Which that he wende han loven in the see,
Aryved is, nat fer fro that citee;
for which, the grettest of his lordes some
By aventure ben to the citee come,
Unto that same temple, for to seke
The quene, and of her socour her beseke;
Swich renoun was ther spronge of her goodnesse.
And, whan they hadden told al hir distresse,
And al hir tempest and hir harde cas,
Unto the quene appered Eneas,
And openly beknew that hit was he.
Who hadde joye than but his meynce,
That hadden founde hir lord, hir governour?
THE quene saw theydide him swich honour,
And had herd ofte of Eneas, er tho,
And in her herte she hadde routhe and wo
That ever swich a noble man as he
Shal been disherited in swich degre;
And saw the man, that he was lyk a knight,
And suffisaunt of persone and of might,
And lyk to been a veray gentil man;
And wel his wordes he besette can,
And had a noble visage for the nones,
And formed wel of braunes and of bones,
for, after Venus, hadde he swich fairnesse,
That no man might be half so fair, I gesse.
And wel a lord he semed for to be.
And, for he was a straunger, somewhat she

The
Legend of
Goode
Wimmen